I Stand
Notes from Planning Meeting
January 8 2005
139 Ralph McGill Blvd

Present: Deepali Gokhale, Badili Jones, Darlene Hudson, Keenun Thomas, Maressa Pendermon, Antonio Jones, Kevin Bynes, Zina Age, Joanne DeMark, Efia Miles, Greg Smith, Craig Washington

Those in attendance collectively decided to create a radical grass roots activist organization to address the socioeconomic and political needs and concerns of black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered people. We assessed several options regarding the kind of organization we wanted to formulate. Some stated a preference for a less formally structured "political action task force" that would not require incorporation. Several said that they were not available to donate the amount of effort and time it would take to build a 501 c 3 organization. The group was cautioned about taking on more than they were able to complete by trying to start an incorporated organization. Kevin Bynes made an impassioned argument in favor of launching an incorporated 501 c 3 organization. We acknowledged that (a) task forces and other similar committees have been short-lived and limited in terms of addressing the ongoing needs and issues we face, (b) a formal organization is required to effect the level of social change needed, and (c) it takes such an organization to garner and sustain the support and participation of our communities. A consensus was reached by a show of hands to found an incorporated organization.

We then listed Values and Principles that would guide the work and culture of the organization. We agreed that we would use "I Stand" as a preliminary organization name until such time as another name is decided and confirmed.

We assigned a "Structure-Building committee" to obtain information regarding our incorporation and structural planning needs. Greg Smith, Maressa Pendermon, Kevin Bynes, Zina Age, Badili Jones, Darlene Hudson and Efia Miles agreed to serve on this committee in various capacities. The committee was asked to bring pertinent information to share with the full planning group at the next planning meeting.

VALUES

The leadership must remain radical.

We must develop and demonstrate an understanding of the intersectionality of human rights struggles in this society.

We do our work in the context of larger communities to which we belong.

GOALS

We will challenge those forces and efforts that attempt to establish a national theocracy and abolish political and cultural pluralism.

We will challenge youth oppression such as std prevention programs that prohibit safer sex education, anti-gay bullying and engage in progressive curriculum development.

We will be supportive of other progressive organizations and work in a collaborative not a competitive fashion.

We will eradicate homophobia in black communities.

We will prioritize working in coalition with progressive allies who may not be lgbt and/or black people.

We will place ourselves as openly lgbt people in various liberation movements

We will engage cultural and religious institutions in black communities i.e., churches, mosques, fraternities, schools.

We will instruct sponsoring partners who wish to provide us financial support to "cut the check – don't direct."

I Stand
Notes from Planning Meeting
January 8 2005
139 Ralph McGill Blvd

Present: Deepali Gokhale, Badili Jones, Darlene Hudson, Keenun Thomas, Maressa Pendermon, Antonio Jones, Kevin Bynes, Zina Age, Joanne DeMark, Efia Miles, Greg Smith, Craig Washington

Those in attendance collectively decided to create a radical grass roots activist organization to address the socioeconomic and political needs and concerns of black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered people. We assessed several options regarding the kind of organization we wanted to formulate. Some stated a preference for a less formally structured "political action task force" that would not require incorporation. Several said that they were not available to donate the amount of effort and time it would take to build a 501 c 3 organization. The group was cautioned about taking on more than they were able to complete by trying to start an incorporated organization. Kevin Bynes made an impassioned argument in favor of launching an incorporated 501 c 3 organization. We acknowledged that (a) task forces and other similar committees have been short-lived and limited in terms of addressing the ongoing needs and issues we face, (b) a formal organization is required to effect the level of social change needed, and (c) it takes such an organization to garner and sustain the support and participation of our communities. A consensus was reached by a show of hands to found an incorporated organization.

We then listed Values and Principles that would guide the work and culture of the organization. We agreed that we would use "I Stand" as a preliminary organization name until such time as another name is decided and confirmed.

We assigned a "Structure-Building committee" to obtain information regarding our incorporation and structural planning needs. Greg Smith, Maressa Pendermon, Kevin Bynes, Zina Age, Badili Jones, Darlene Hudson and Efia Miles agreed to serve on this committee in various capacities. The committee was asked to bring pertinent information to share with the full planning group at the next planning meeting.

VALUES

The leadership must remain radical.

We must develop and demonstrate an understanding of the intersectionality of human rights struggles in this society.

We do our work in the context of larger communities to which we belong.

GOALS

We will challenge those forces and efforts that attempt to establish a national theocracy and abolish political and cultural pluralism.

We will challenge youth oppression such as std prevention programs that prohibit safer sex education, anti-gay bullying and engage in progressive curriculum development.

We will be supportive of other progressive organizations and work in a collaborative not a competitive fashion.

We will eradicate homophobia in black communities.

We will prioritize working in coalition with progressive allies who may not be lgbt and/or black people.

We will place ourselves as openly lgbt people in various liberation movements

We will engage cultural and religious institutions in black communities i.e., churches, mosques, fraternities, schools.

We will instruct sponsoring partners who wish to provide us financial support to "cut the check – don't direct."

I Stand
Notes from Planning Meeting
January 8 2005
139 Ralph McGill Blvd

Present: Deepali Gokhale, Badili Jones, Darlene Hudson, Keenun Thomas, Maressa Pendermon, Antonio Jones, Kevin Bynes, Zina Age, Joanne DeMark, Efia Miles, Greg Smith, Craig Washington

Those in attendance collectively decided to create a radical grass roots activist organization to address the socioeconomic and political needs and concerns of black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered people. We assessed several options regarding the kind of organization we wanted to formulate. Some stated a preference for a less formally structured "political action task force" that would not require incorporation. Several said that they were not available to donate the amount of effort and time it would take to build a 501 c 3 organization. The group was cautioned about taking on more than they were able to complete by trying to start an incorporated organization. Kevin Bynes made an impassioned argument in favor of launching an incorporated 501 c 3 organization. We acknowledged that (a) task forces and other similar committees have been short-lived and limited in terms of addressing the ongoing needs and issues we face, (b) a formal organization is required to effect the level of social change needed, and (c) it takes such an organization to garner and sustain the support and participation of our communities. A consensus was reached by a show of hands to found an incorporated organization.

We then listed Values and Principles that would guide the work and culture of the organization. We agreed that we would use "I Stand" as a preliminary organization name until such time as another name is decided and confirmed.

We assigned a "Structure-Building committee" to obtain information regarding our incorporation and structural planning needs. Greg Smith, Maressa Pendermon, Kevin Bynes, Zina Age, Badili Jones, Darlene Hudson and Efia Miles agreed to serve on this committee in various capacities. The committee was asked to bring pertinent information to share with the full planning group at the next planning meeting.

VALUES

The leadership must remain radical.

We must develop and demonstrate an understanding of the intersectionality of human rights struggles in this society.

We do our work in the context of larger communities to which we belong.

GOALS

We will challenge those forces and efforts that attempt to establish a national theocracy and abolish political and cultural pluralism.

We will challenge youth oppression such as std prevention programs that prohibit safer sex education, anti-gay bullying and engage in progressive curriculum development.

We will be supportive of other progressive organizations and work in a collaborative not a competitive fashion.

We will eradicate homophobia in black communities.

We will prioritize working in coalition with progressive allies who may not be lgbt and/or black people.

We will place ourselves as openly lgbt people in various liberation movements

We will engage cultural and religious institutions in black communities i.e., churches, mosques, fraternities, schools.

We will instruct sponsoring partners who wish to provide us financial support to "cut the check – don't direct."

Dear_____,

Thank you so very much for signing on to the recently published open letter to Martin Luther King. As a member of the black clergy, you enjoined considerable risk by publicly challenging the oppressive actions of your peers. We who are black, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered, who have long suffered and continue to endure pervasive scorn and rejection from our own families, communities, and spiritual leaders, we thank you. We realize that history will remember this letter as a poignant tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and a timely message that calls on black religious leaders to stop subjugating women and condemning same gender loving people and start practicing and promoting a deeper faith that is fully inclusive of all black people.

I Stand is a newly developing organization founded to achieve greater social justice through addressing the political needs and concerns of black LGBT people. We recognize the links between racism, sexism, homophobia, and class oppression and our divine interconnection as a people who are varied in gender, sexual orientation, class, physical ability, and spiritual culture. The members of I Stand appreciate you and applaud your decision to take a radical stand for freedom and justice. We stand in solidarity with you.

Appeal to State of the Black Union attendants

We are members of I Stand a new organization founded by black gay and lesbian organizers in Atlanta. I Stand was created to achieve greater social justice by addressing the political needs and concerns of black gays, lesbians, transgendered persons and allsexuals. *We recognize the links between racism, sexism, homophobia, and class oppression and our irrefutable interconnection as black people who are varied in gender, sexual orientation, class, physical ability, spiritual culture and other aspects of identity and experience.*

I Stand was conceptualized shortly after the demonstration staged to protest the *Re-Ignite the Legacy March* led by Bishop Eddie Long of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church. We saw this march as but one example of the strategic efforts of black clergy and white conservative leaders to repeal and preclude the civil rights of gays and lesbians. We believe that the "state of the union" in Black America is sorely threatened as many of our religious leaders deem certain black people as undeserving of equal rights and protections and collude with white conservative forces to enforce theocratic domination. These concerns served as a primary catalyst for the creation of I Stand.

We sent you this message because we were informed that you were invited to speak at the upcoming State of the Black Union in Atlanta on February 26th. We ask that you utilize this opportunity to address the need for black people to seek more mutual understanding and foster more acceptance of our collective sexual diversity. Since you are a highly respected figure, we believe that your commentary will wield considerable influence. Our people will listen to what you have to say. We ask that you strongly consider taking a public stand during this forum against the injustice and hypocrisy of homophobia and all other forms of oppression practiced by us against us.

Thank you,

I Stand

Dear Martin,

Every third Monday in January history compels us to remember and reactivate your legacy. How shall we honor you? And how shall we honor our deepest and truest selves? Nearly four decades have passed since you left your legacy to us, and what a momentous legacy it was. Yours was the vision of a transformed nation, a society that dared to practice the very brotherhood - and sisterhood - that it preached. In a time of tremendous social upheaval you joined the freedom-loving and justice-seeking tradition of your people, black people, and you did so at great personal cost. Using nonviolent direct action, you challenged the existing status quo. In the presence of your enemies - citizen's councils, police dogs, fire hoses, bigoted mobs, half-hearted allies, Christian racists, the FBI - you practiced an insurgent religious faith. You modeled for others the commitment to racial justice and reconciling peace. With your very body and life you led us into the magnificent, multi-colored and multi-ethnic quest of justice, peace and human community. Sore distressed, we the people, have yet to catch up to your radically inclusive vision.

For African Americans, the cumulative effect of the last forty years has been as disturbing as it is dramatic. In the new millennium, our elusive and torturous quest for freedom and equality continues. The full repercussions of radical democracy in the United States are not yet known. The vast majority of whites see themselves as non-racist and live comfortably with little or no real contact with other racial-ethnic people. Oblivious to the obvious (and sometimes the not so obvious), the connection between white privilege and black rage is discounted, resisted, denied. In our houses of worship, in the ivory tower, in the corporate boardroom, in the halls of government, in popular culture and mass media, in states red, purple and blue, in old and new formations, racism lives on. In the U.S., racial exclusion is still second nature. Racism is who we are. It is our way of life.

Sadly, many black people now have difficulty seeing their connections to other black people. We have embraced societal distinctions that separate us by age, education, gender, sexuality and class. We have forgotten the example set by so many courageous souls a generation ago. Mose Wright, Daisy Bates, Jo Ann Robinson, E.D. Dixon, Ella Baker, Bob Moses, Diane Nash, Fannie Lou Hamer, Septima Clark, John Lewis and Bayard Rustin were part of that magnificent movement of blackness that emerged, broke beyond itself, widened the circle of humanity, and called forth women, children and men of all colors and conditions.

The painful truth is that we now often violate and oppress our own in the name of religion. Always, at the center of the heart of the historic black-led struggle for freedom was the black religious experience. Black self-love was upheld as a divine imperative. Local black churches became ecumenical networks of nurture and resistance. At those beleaguered places of our most urgent human need common

ground often could be sought and found in the church. But not always. Movement women like Ella Baker, organizer of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, found themselves at odds with the sexism and sexual misconduct of male ministers. An out gay man like Bayard Rustin, architect of the 1963 March on Washington, was feared as a potential threat to the advancement of the race. Today, in the imperfectly desegregated post-civil rights era, religiously inspired leadership continues to perpetuate a cruel sexual ethic, and in stark violation of their own best sacred inheritance. That black women continue to be relegated to secondary status and lesbians and gays are made to feel unwelcome, unworthy, and uncomfortable in what should be the most caring, compassionate and empowering of communions is a searing indictment against all the black faithful.

Martin, like you, we are sometimes uncertain in our leadership. The dominant views on sex, sexuality and gender in the Black Church are undermining community, diminishing the faith and leading many to abandon churches out of sheer moral frustration and exhaustion. Our churches have been slow to embrace gender equality. They have largely spoken only opposition and condemnation to same gender loving people and have been unable to proclaim a sexually liberating and redemptive word. Some black churches have concluded it is in their best institutional interest to participate in "special rights" polemics against this so-called "immoral humanity." As black clergy we offer here a more hope- filled perspective.

In the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth, we the undersigned clergy extend the divine invitation of human wholeness, healing and affirmation to "whosoever" (John 3:16). In the best of the Black Church tradition we say, "Whosoever will, let her or him come." Who is included in this "whosoever?" The "whosoever" of today are the diseased and the dis-eased, the discomforted and the distressed, those who live on the margins of the marginalized, who are the oppressed of the oppressed, the sexually battered and the abused, the homeless and the bereft, the HIV/AIDS infected, who are the young and old, female and male, lesbian and bisexual, transgender and straight. These are they, the children of God. They are our sisters and brothers and partners and friends. They belong to all of us. And they are very much we ourselves.

As Black Christian religious leaders what more shall we do? We must help to forge a progressive agenda for the black community in which race, gender, class, age and sexuality are kept in active dialogue with one another. We must engage one another, prophetically demand more of one another, and prepare to suffer, cry, and toil with each other when it comes to matters of racial and sexual justice, economic and political empowerment, to waging peace. We must be courageous in confronting the social conditions that divide; elitism, poverty, militarism and more await our deepest response. We must continue to look to the ancestors and to Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith." We must dedicate ourselves to a world where borders can be crossed and a new consensus

can be found, where we call our own community beloved and celebrate black people, one unique person at a time. Martin, on your day we vow to take a stand to love all black people. We vow to accept and to honor all regardless of their gender, class, age, or sexuality for we all are the children of God. The power is in our hands. This is where we must go from here.

Respectfully,

"An Open Letter to Martin"
Signers (organizations for identification purposes only)

Rev. Ayanna Abi-Kyles
Program of Black Church Studies, Candler School of Theology, Emory University Shrine of the Black Madonna, Atlanta, GA

Rev. Margaret Aymer, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of New Testament
The Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, GA

Randall C. Bailey
Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Hebrew Bible
Interdenominational Theological Center

Daniel Black (Omotosho Jojomani), Ph.D.
Professor of English/African American Studies
Clark Atlanta University

Rev. Edward B. Branch, D.Min
Catholic Chaplain
Atlanta University Center

Rev. Michael Joseph Brown, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins Emory University

Dr. Lawrence Edward Carter, Sr.
Dean of the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Chapel Morehouse College

The Reverend Da Vita CarterMcCallister,
Staff Associate, First Congregational Church UCC

Rev. Michelle Holmes Chaney
Program Coordinator
Interfaith Health Program
Emory University

William T Chaney Jr.
Senior Partner
Chaney and Associates, LLC

Rev. Jawanza (Eric) Clark
Pan African Orthodox Christian Church-Shrines of the Black Madonna, Pastor

Will Coleman, Ph.D.

Theologian and Kabbalist
Co-director, Black Kabbalah Institute

Sybil Corbin, M.Div.

Rev. T. Renee Crutcher
Spiritual and Creative Director
Sankofa Ministries & Tellin' Our Story Publishing, Inc.

Rev. McClain Dyson
New Bethel A.M.E. Church
Lithonia, GA

Dr. Teresa Fry Brown
Associate Professor of Homiletics
Candler School of Theology, Emory University

Minister Ronald W Galvin, Jr.
Community Organizer
Atlanta, Georgia

Rev. Willie F. Goodman, Jr., Th.D.,
Black Pastoral Theologian

Reverend Vivian Green

Rev. Dr. Maisha I. Handy
Assistant Professor of Christian Education
Interdenominational Theological Center
First Iconium Baptist Church

Rev. Renee K. Harrison
Emory University, Ph.D. candidate
Department of Religion

Rev. Wallace S. Hartsfield, II, Pastor
First Mount Pleasant Baptist Church

Dorinda Henry, MTS

David Anderson Hooker

Min. BaSean Jackson (ssc)
Ph.D Student at Emory University

Rev. Shonda R. Jones
Clergy, United Methodist Church
Assistant Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid
Candler School of Theology
Emory University

Emmanuel Y. Lartey, Ph.D.
Professor of Pastoral Theology, Care and Counseling
Candler School of Theology,
Emory University.
Pastor, Ghana Interdenominational Church, Atlanta.

Rev. Portia Wills Lee
Trinity African Baptist Church
592 Veterans Memorial Highway
Mableton, GA. 30126

Stephen Lewis
Program Coordinator, Pastoral Leadership Search Effort (PLSE) The Fund for Theological Education

Reverend Dr. Mark A. Lomax, Pastor
First African Presbyterian Church
Assistant Professor of Homiletics
Interdenominational Theological Center

Herbert R. Marbury,
University Chaplain
Assistant Professor of Religion
Clark Atlanta University

Rev. Timothy McDonald, III
Pastor, First Iconium Baptist Church

Rev. Veronice Miles
Minister of Christian Education, Greater Bethany Baptist Church
Graduate Student, Emory University Graduate Division of Religion

Reverend Susan C. Mitchell
Co-Pastor Sankofa United Church of Christ

Rev. Deborah F. Mullen, Ph.D.

Reverend A. Nevell Owens

Rev. Chauncey R. Newsome
Assistant Pastor
First Iconium Baptist Church

Rev. Jeanette Pinkston
Associate Pastor
Saint Philip AME Church, Atlanta, GA

Alton B. Pollard, III, Ph.D.
Director, Program of Black Church Studies and
Associate Professor of Religion and Culture
Candler School of Theology
Emory University

Reverend Derrick L. Rice
Co-Pastor Sankofa United Church of Christ

Rev. Fert Richardson
Pastor
Suwanee Parish United Methodist Church

Rev. Marcia Y. Riggs, Ph.D.
J. Erskine Love Professor of Christian Ethics
Columbia Theological Seminary

Rev. Aaron Naeem Robinson

Rosetta E. Ross, Chair
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies,
Spelman College.

Rev. Melva L. Sampson
Project Manager
Sisters Chapel WISDOM Center
Spelman College

Rev. Roslyn M. Satchel, Esq.
Executive Director
National Center for Human Rights Education

Rev. Dr. Teresa E. Snorton
CME Minister
Co-Chair, First African Community Development Corporation

Dr. Dianne Stewart,
Departments of Religion and
African American Studies
Emory University

Dr. Lewis T. Tait, Jr.,
Senior Pastor, Imani Christian Center

The Rev. Dr. Eugene Turner
Retired Presbyterian Church USA Minister
President of the Board of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary,
Atlanta, GA

Rev. Lamont Anthony Wells
Senior Pastor, Lutheran Church of the Atonement
President, Southeastern Synod Black Pastors Conference

Min. Michael J. Wright

Gayraud S. Wilmore
Emeritus Prof. African American Church History Interdenominational
Theological Center, Atlanta

Reverend Bridgette D. Young
Associate Dean of the Chapel and Religious Life
Emory University

©Atlanta Daily World 2005